



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



SOUTH DAKOTA AWARDED NCA GRANT FOR STATE VETERANS CEMETERY

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has awarded South Dakota a grant in the amount of \$6,904,794 for the establishment of South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery in Sioux Falls.

"Partnering with South Dakota to establish a new veterans cemetery in the eastern half of the state is exactly the kind of project that the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program was made for" said Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Randy Reeves. "This new cemetery will give tens of thousands of veterans and their families the peace of mind that comes from knowing they will have a burial option close to home."

This grant will fund the construction of 610 pre-placed crypts, 999 cremains gravesites, 660 columbarium niches, 50 memorial wall markers, a main entrance, an avenue of flags, an administration building, a maintenance facility, roads, an assembly area, a committal shelter, scatter burial area, a memorial walkway, landscaping, and supporting infrastructure. The project will develop approximately 12.9 acres. The project will enable the cemetery to serve approximately 43,000 Veterans, their spouses and eligible family members.

The closest national cemetery is Black Hills National Cemetery in Sturgis, South Dakota, which is approximately 408 miles away.

The VA [Veterans Cemetery Grants Program](#) (VCGP) complements the 136 VA national cemeteries across the country. Since its inception 41 years ago, the VCGP has awarded grants totaling more than \$817 million to establish, expand, improve, or operate and maintain 115 state and tribal Veterans cemeteries. These VA-funded cemeteries provided more than 39,000 burials in 2018.

For more information about the South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery, contact SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard at 605-360-4173.

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VETERANS DAY AT THE FAIR

At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Gov. Kristi Noem has proclaimed Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, as Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair, calling on all South Dakotans to honor those men and women who fought bravely for our freedoms.

At 10:30 a.m. on August 29, the South Dakota State Fair will host a "Salute to Veterans" program. The program will be held on the Northwest Energy Freedom Stage (Recreation Avenue). Greg Whitlock, Secretary for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, will be the keynote speaker.

"Whether in peace or at war, the important role of our veterans cannot be denied. They are men and women from all walks of life that have one thing in common --- a love for this great country," said Secretary Whitlock. "No matter where or when veterans have served, they've always served with distinction and their service to this country is a bridge that was built on courage, dedication and patriotism."

Representatives from the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Service Organizations, as well as county veterans service officers will have informational booths in the Veterans Building on Flag Avenue throughout the week. Veterans are encouraged to stop by the booth and learn more about benefits and programs available to them as well.

Whitlock especially encourages Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans to stop by and visit with SDDVA staff about disability benefits.

To show appreciation for their service, the Fair will give all veterans and active military personnel free gate admission on Aug 29.

VETERANS DAY
Honoring All Who Served.

★
THANK YOU.



SD ARMY NATIONAL GUARD COMMISSIONS SEVEN OFFICERS

Seven South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers ascended to the officer corps as second lieutenants during a commissioning ceremony at Camp Rapid, Aug. 16.

The ceremony commemorated the completion of Officer Candidate School, which consisted of a year and a half of drill weekends and two, two-week training periods.

"When commissioning traditional candidates, it is rewarding to see their excitement," said Maj. Michael Bierle, company commander for 1st Battalion, 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute). "It's a great culmination after a long, grueling and grinding year to see the candidates' excitement at commissioning."

The ceremony included several traditions: the pinning of rank on the officers' uniform, their first salute and taking the Oath of Office led by SDNG Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Jeff Marlette. Marlette chose to introduce each candidate individually with a short bio during the ceremony.

"It isn't just about us, but about family," said Marlette. "It takes more than just the Soldiers - it takes the support from our families to accomplish the mission."

Class 63 was unique in the history of South Dakota's OCS program. "We were the first graduating class made up entirely of married Soldiers," said 2nd Lt. Tyler Gregor, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 109th Regional Support Group. "This experience solidified the importance of building camaraderie as you see in separations such as deployments.

"The OCS program was a real eye-opener," said Gregor. "It really focused on mentoring us to become better leaders and making sure we can withstand the stressors of being an officer."

The graduates were not the only honorees of the ceremony. One of their instructors, Sgt. 1st Class Chad Hartley, was named Instructor of the Year. "I am honored and humbled to receive this award," said Hartley. "I have 22 years in the National Guard, and I was considering retirement but this class made me realize how much I enjoyed instructing and mentoring, so I decided to reenlist for another six years."

The second lieutenants of OCS Class 63 are:

Soldier	Hometown	Unit of Assignment
2nd Lt. Steven Edoff	Rapid City	842nd Engineer Company
2nd Lt. Zachary Erickson	Rapid City	665th Maintenance Company
2nd Lt. Tyler Gregor	Black Hawk	Headquarters Detachment, 109th Regional Support Group
2nd Lt. Erin McGaugh	Huron	196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade
2nd Lt. Jarod Morken	Crooks	Headquarters Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion
2nd Lt. Katie Mack	Sioux Falls	Headquarters Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion
2nd Lt. Matthew Nedved	Sioux Falls	Headquarters Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion



VA MODIFIES SMOKE-FREE POLICIES AT HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) commitment to a smoke-free health care environment for veterans, in October, the department will extend its smoke-free policies to include employees at its health care facilities.

This follows the department's June 10 announcement of a new policy restricting smoking by patients, visitors, volunteers, contractors and vendors at its health care facilities. The integration of these two efforts guarantees a fully smoke-free environment for veterans.

"This policy change is consistent with our mission to promote a healthy environment for patients, visitors and employees at our facilities and is an important element of improving our health care system," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "It will reduce the harmful effects of smoking, including exposure to second and third-hand smoke, as well as increase safety and reduce fire hazards caused by smoking."

The VA has collaborated with key stakeholders to update and recertify the employee policy to be consistent with department's commitment to Veterans and the community. Implementation of the employee smoke-free policy will be completed no later than January 2020 based on employee union-negotiated timelines.

The Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) smoke-free policy applies to cigarettes, cigars, pipes, any other combustion of tobacco and non-Federal Drug Administration approved electronic nicotine delivery systems, including but not limited to electronic or e-cigarettes, vape pens or e-cigars.

To learn more about health risks associated with smoking, visit the Surgeon General's website at <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/tobacco/index.html> or <https://smokefree.gov/>.

VHA has resources and programs to assist employees in their smoke free journey and these can be found at the following VHA website at <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/>

For additional information about the policy visit https://vaww.va.gov/vhapublications/admin/ViewPublication.asp?Pub_ID=8424.



VA SHOW AND SHINE

SDDVA State Veterans Service Officers Jerry Lemme and Brian Voges conducted outreach last week at the Sioux Falls VA Health Care Center's annual Show and Shine in Sioux Falls.

Voges and Lemme fielded questions on the new state cemetery, blue water navy veterans benefits and healthcare benefits.

Estimated attendance at the annual Show and Shine was over 400.

SFVAHCS PAO Erin Bultje stopped by and visited the booth!



PURPLE HEART COMMUNITIES



Community leaders and veterans gathered in De Smet on Tuesday to honor Purple Heart recipients.

Speakers for the ceremony included: Department of the Dakotas Military Order of the Purple Heart Commander Ken Teunissen, SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock and Kingsbury County Veterans Service Officer Gary Schumacher.

Honored

were Purple Heart recipients, Gold Star families, and families of those killed in action.

Kingsbury County and the communities of: Arlington, Badger, Bancroft, De Smet, Erwin, Hetland, Iroquois, Lake Preston, and Oldham became Purple Heart Communities and were presented with Purple Heart, Combat Wounded, and Veteran Only Parking signs.



TURNER COUNTY HONORS VIETNAM WAR VETERANS

Vietnam Veterans were honored during a special program at the Turner County Fair.

Turner County Veterans Service Officer Tom Sparrow coordinated the great program to honor Vietnam War and Vietnam Era Veterans. Sparrow conducts special honoring and recognition ceremonies each year at the Turner County Fair.

SDDVA Field Service Officer Brett Dickerson attended the honoring ceremony and served as a resource to assist veterans.



POLLARD RECEIVES ESGR PATRIOT AWARD

SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard was presented a “Patriot Award” from the Office of the Secretary of Defense Employer Support and the Guard and Reserve. The award recognizes Pollard and the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs as a “patriotic employer.”

ESGR Representative Brian Vognild presented the award to Pollard with SDDVA’s Guy Arnold participating.

Arnold serves as SDDVA’s special projects coordinator and is scheduled to deploy with the Alpha Battery 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion and the 147th Forward Support Company in early September.

Our Nation has relied heavily on Guard and Reserve Service members since entering continuous operations more than 14 years ago. Employer support enhances retention rates in the Armed Forces and, in the end, strengthens our national security. Recognizing supportive employers is vital to ESGR's mission.



OPERATION SONG

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today it is expanding its partnership with non-profit Operation Song to launch a series of songwriting retreats aimed at helping veterans share and cope with military experiences through music.

Operation Song is hosting 10 veterans for a three-day weekend retreat in Nashville, Tennessee, from Aug. 15-17.

“The VA is committed to exploring new and innovative ways to care for veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This includes using creative arts therapies in conjunction with community partners to help veterans express themselves when conventional therapeutic methods may not be enough.”

Founded by Grammy and Dove-award nominated songwriter, Bob Regan, Operation Song’s first three-day music retreat in partnership with VA was held in Nov. 2018. During that event professional songwriters and VA therapists worked with veterans to write and record songs.

The Nashville-based organization has worked with hundreds of veterans from nearly every military conflict to tell their sometimes-challenging stories using music.

While a background in music is not necessary to participate, interested veterans must be referred by their VA health care provider, be able to function independently and willing to travel to the retreat location. The program is offered at no cost to veteran participants.

[VA’s Voluntary Service](#), [Veterans Canteen Service](#) and Recreation Therapy Service, collaborate with Operation Song to coordinate these events. This year’s program will be fully funded through the generous support of Veterans Canteen Service, however, VA encourages donations and sponsorships from organizations and individuals who would like this type of programming to reach as many Veterans as possible. To volunteer or donate, visit <https://www.volunteer.va.gov/apps/VolunteerNow/default.asp>.

For more information about Operation Song, visit <http://www.operationsong.org/>. To read stories from the 2018 retreat, visit VA’s official blog, [Vantage Point](#). To watch the promotional video for these [retreats](#), go to [VA’s Official YouTube webpage](#).



CAMP RAPID TO HOST TRANSFER OF MEMORY HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

The South Dakota National Guard will host Transfer of Memory, a photo exhibition of Holocaust survivors living in Minnesota, from Sept. 9-27 on Camp Rapid.

The exhibit will be open to the public for viewing Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at the Joint Force Headquarters building on Camp Rapid (2823 W. Main Street, Rapid City).

A public program will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 11, at 2 p.m. to highlight the exhibit, which shares stories of survival during exceedingly difficult circumstances, and will include a remembrance tribute honoring the victims and survivors of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The program will feature speakers Steve Hunegs, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas, and Col. Laurence Bazer, a Jewish chaplain with the National Guard Bureau, who will talk of his experiences ministering to the victims and first responders in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Each Holocaust survivor in Transfer of Memory shares a story of survival, yet as a collection, these images focus on life and hope. From Europe to Minnesota, it was here they fashioned their dreams, their futures, and their families - their lives are a constant reminder of the value of freedom and the enduring human spirit. Photographer David Sherman and writer Lili Chester, in partnership with the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas, created the photography exhibition.

"This exhibition has enabled the JCRC's Holocaust education program to bring lessons of the Shoah (Holocaust) to communities in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Wisconsin who otherwise might not receive firsthand accounts from Holocaust survivors," said Steve Hunegs, JCRC executive director.

"Transfer of Memory reminds us all of a memory that must never be forgotten - that there was a time in history where people were exterminated solely on the basis of their ethnic or religious convictions," said Col. Lynn Wilson, South Dakota National Guard state chaplain. "But the Transfer of Memory reminds us of a second memory as important - that no pit is so deep that God is not deeper still. No horror can break the resilient spirit that knows there is always hope no matter how bad things may currently be."



(Continued on next page.)

PHOTO EXHIBIT (CONTINUED)

The exhibition features 45 portraits of survivors living - or who lived - in Minnesota. There are 53 total Holocaust survivors photographed in the exhibit, and sadly, 23 of the survivors have passed away. The color images depict the survivors as living full and fulfilled lives - full of life and vitality - not defined by victimhood.

Each survivor was photographed in their home and everyone was interviewed and videotaped prior to making their portrait. Text, distilled from the survivor interviews, accompanies each portrait and provides background and a short history in the survivors' own words.

This exhibition is curated by JCRC staff members, Laura Zelle and Susie Greenberg, and is a collaboration between David Sherman, Lili Chester, and the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas.

For more information about the exhibition, please visit <http://transferofmemory.org/>. Follow @TransferMemory on Twitter, @TransferofMemory on Instagram, and @TransferofMemory on Facebook.

FUNERAL PLANNING OUTREACH

Working with Charles Mix and Douglas County VSOs Jerry Seiner and Fred Kuil, SDDVA Field Service Officer Kevin Bowen conducted funeral planning workshops in Corsica and Platte this week.

Bowen and funeral home directors provided attendees in both communities with information on burial benefits, comp, pension, DIC, living wills, trusts, wills, pre-planning funerals, funeral trusts, and long term care.

Bowen also discussed the state and national veterans cemeteries.





The poster features a rustic, parchment-like background with a decorative border at the top. At the top left is the Pizza Ranch logo, and at the top right is the 'TIP NIGHT FUNDRAISING EVENT' logo. The central text reads: 'YOU ARE INVITED TO A PIZZA RANCH TIP NIGHT TO BENEFIT The Military Order of the Purple Heart'. Below this, the date, time, and location are listed.

**YOU ARE INVITED TO A
PIZZA RANCH
TIP NIGHT
TO BENEFIT**

The

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Date: Wednesday, September 4th

Time: 5:00 – 8:00 PM

Location: 2717 W 41st St, Sioux Falls, SD 57105



Groundbreaking Ceremony for
South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery
Monday, September 9, at 9:00 am (CT)



Directions —

If traveling on I-229 North: Take I-229 North until it ends and turns into Jim Zweep Highway. Approximately a quarter mile north turn right onto Slip Up Creek Road. Follow Slip Up Creek Road until you see the entrance to the cemetery land.

If you're traveling on I-90: Whether traveling East or West on I-90 take the Cliff Avenue Exit (Exit 399) and head North. Travel North approximately three miles to 258th Street. Turn Right heading East on 258th St. Approximately two miles East turn right on to 477th Ave heading South. Travel South approximately one-and-a-half miles and the cemetery property will be on your right.

Good tip for the event — please remind anyone attending to pack their lawn chairs for the groundbreaking. A limited amount of chairs will be available for the speakers and for those with mobility issues.



Aug 23—Higashi Ceremony—Meier Hall—Black Hills State University Campus (Yellow Jacket Lane)—Spearfish—10:00 am (MT)

Aug 24—Lerew French Medal of Honor Ceremony—Methodist Church (1011 St. John Street)—Faulkton—10:30 am (CT)

Aug 24—Traupel French Medal of Honor Ceremony—Veterans Park (1st and Main Street) - Mitchell—4:00 pm (CT)
Alternate address if weather issues—Corn Palace (601 N. Main)

Aug 24—Wine and Gala Auction (Midwest Honor Flight Benefit)—Calico Skies Winery

Aug 24-25—Fall River Hot Air Balloon Festival

Aug 24—Vietnam Veterans State Council Meeting—American Legion Post 8—Pierre—11:00 am (CT)

Aug 26—Sioux Falls Barrel House (Midwest Honor Flight Benefit—10% all day to MWHF)—4701 E 54th Street

Aug 29—Veterans Day at the Fair—Rushmore Mall—Rapid City—9:00 am—Noon (MT)

Aug 26-29—SDDVA Benefit School

Aug 31—15th Annual 727th Transportation/DAV Poker Run—Swiftel Center—Brookings

Sep 3—High Five Tour Ford 150 Raptor—Sioux Falls Ford (4901 W. 26th Street)—8:00—10:00 am (CT)

Sep 4—SFVAHCS Veterans Town Hall—Aberdeen

Sep 7—114th Yellow Ribbon Event—Sioux Falls Ramkota Hotel (3200 W. Maple Street) 7:30 am (CT)

Sep 9—SD State Veterans Cemetery Groundbreaking—9:00 am (CT)

Sep 12—SD Veterans Commission Conf. Call Meeting—4:00 pm (CT)

Sep 14—SDSU 2nd Annual Veterans Affairs Golf Tournament—Edgebrook Golf Course—Brookings—8:00 am (CT)

Sep 21—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street)—9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)

Sep 21—Davison County Veterans Wellness and Benefit Fair—Mitchell Corn Palace—8:00 am—4:30 pm (CT)

Sep 21—EAFB Health and Wellness Expo—

Sep 21-22—SD American Legion Golf Tournament—Hartford Golf Course

Sep 24—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 5 Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—8:45 pm (CT)—doors open at 7:15

Oct 12 Midwest Honor Flight Mission 6

Nov 2—Second Annual Hangar Dance (Midwest Honor Flight Benefit)—Mid America Museum of Aviation—Sioux City, IA—7:00 pm (CT)

Dec 3—Governor Noem's Budget Address

Jan 14—State of the State Address

Jan 15—SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception

Mar 27-29 SD Vietnam and Era Veterans Reunion—Dakota Sioux Casino—Watertown

May 30—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 7

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